

and my fellow senators there are a couple of other programs that we ought to eliminate. We are looking at those too.

We looked at them in the Health and Human Services areas, Senator COBURN and I did, and found there was \$9 billion of duplication. Do we need duplication? I would hope not. Senator COBURN got so excited, he did this same study for the entire Federal Government and found \$900 billion in duplication. Does that mean a whole lot of other agencies were a whole lot less efficient than Health and Human Services? No. It means we have duplicative programs in every single agency.

We also have financial literacy programs in every single agency. If we are spending \$3.456 trillion and only getting \$2.2 trillion in revenue, is the financial literacy in our government working? I don't think so.

When I first got here, there were 119 preschool education programs. Preschool is important. The start children get from when they are first born until they go to school makes a huge difference in their growth and development for the rest of their lives. However, we had 119 programs and once we took a closer look, we found many of them, according to their own evaluation, were failing. We now have that number down to 69 programs. Do you know why we can't go below 69? My jurisdiction as Ranking Member of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee is over the Department of Education, which only has 8 programs—8 of 69 preschool programs. The Department of Agriculture has the most preschool programs.

That's why, when Senator COBURN is talking about duplication and looking at the complete picture of everything the Federal Government does, there is duplication in each and every agency. What we are going to have to do is pick out those that operate with the most efficiency and results, give them a little more funding and eliminate the other duplicative programs. Getting rid of duplication is a surer way of solving the problem than some of the other ways that have been talked about.

One other avenue we keep talking about is waste, fraud, and abuse. Yes, there is waste, fraud, and abuse. We need everybody in America to help us find that waste, fraud, and abuse, but in reality, the total cost of waste, fraud, and abuse is a rather elusive number. Does anybody know how big that is? Everybody is guessing. It is only a guess how much there is. We need to find it, and we need to be taking the money from eliminating these actions before we spend it.

We will sometimes attempt to use the waste, fraud, and abuse numbers as the pay-for for a new program. We aren't able to spend that money until we actually have it, but what happens it is used as pay-for and the program goes into effect, but nobody follows up to go out and dig up that waste, fraud, and abuse. Instead, the waste, fraud, and abuse money ought to go into a

fund before it can be spent on something else.

However, when I am talking about duplication, the \$900 billion worth of duplication, I am talking about numbers that we can go to the Federal budget and look up. We can find out exactly how much those programs are spending. In its duplication, we wouldn't eliminate all of them, but we ought to be able to eliminate half of them. Madam President, \$450 billion alone, half of Senator COBURN's total duplication findings, would be a huge change for this country.

I hope we look at some of those ideas to cut spending. I have a 15-page speech that would explain some ways we could solve this problem, but what I am trying to do is get people to grasp the concept that our Federal tax receipts, and total revenue, is far outweighed by the circle that shows what we are spending. As a family, people know they can't budget this way. As a government, we can't do it for very long, even if we print our own money. Somehow we are going to have to shrink the spending circle down until it is that size or grow the revenue circle until it is—they are comparable in size, or a combination of the two. As I said, I will give some other speeches to outline some of my other ideas. In the meantime, I hope everybody will take a look at the chart I have shown today.

We can't look at it and say don't touch Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security, we can't have \$½ trillion of extra expenditure spending in that category alone for long. There is another \$416 trillion in mandatory spending in that same category. How long can we keep spending at this rate? What happens if interest rates go up? This piece of the spending pie can become much bigger and probably will. I don't know how long we can keep interest rates as low rate as they are now. If they go up, it will help some seniors because they have some investments in cash that would get higher interest rates, but for the country as a whole, rising interest rates that already make up 6 percent of our budget will only be more cause for worry. When that one expands above the 1 percent we are spending right now—and it is going to expand in the next couple of years because of what is happening in Europe—we had better be worried about it.

This is the kind of picture shown by the deficit commission that Erskine Bowles and Alan Simpson chaired. I was hoping we would repaint this picture a number of times between the time they released their report 1 year ago and now, because we have to get America to understand. Actually, I can tell you the people in my State understand this. I don't need to explain it to them. They know how much more we are spending versus what we are taking in. They can even tell you the numbers. They are concerned, and they need to be concerned. We all need to be concerned.

I am open to suggestions on this. I will have some speeches I'll give later

reiterating this definite problem we are in. I have said a number of times our country has maxed out its credit cards.

A couple weeks ago during a trip to Wyoming, I checked into a hotel and I used my Senate credit card. The lady a few moments later, very embarrassed, said: "I am sorry, but your card is being rejected." I said: "I guess the Federal Government is in worse trouble than I thought," and used my own card and it went through.

We had better be worrying about it now because we do have a problem. We have maxed out our credit cards, and there are not any other places we can go for money. We have been the bastion of money for years.

Keep in this in mind. Start thinking of ways we can actually make some cuts and increase some revenues. I have ideas for both in speeches I'll give in the future. We are in a crisis. It will be a more immediate crisis any time and we are no longer spending our grandkids' money; we are spending our kids' money, and it is about to come due on us. When I say "on us," I am even including myself and the seniors in that count. The day of reckoning is not far away.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. I ask to speak as if in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

FUTURE OF AMERICA

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, we are here now deciding what kind of a country America might be in the future—whether it will be a place we can look back at and remember when everybody had a chance at success.

It is hard to believe that when we look at the vote we just had. It confirmed where the Republicans are on the issue of whether middle-class families should get a tax break. The Republican answer, was no. The answer they gave on the middle-class families tax break was: Absolutely no. No, no, no.

To the struggling single parent who wants to provide for their family, works hard every day, the Republicans said no way. To the recent college graduate trying to start a career but having trouble paying back college loans, paying rent, paying living costs, the Republicans said no. To the working couple, a family with a couple of kids who needs some help in this tough economy, the Republicans said no. No, no, no. The Republicans refuse to help them because their mission is to shield the wealthy from paying their fair share of our country's obligations.

Across our country, Americans are watching Republicans in this Congress and wondering what they are going to do to supply encouragement and hope for people who need it. Are we going to be simply a big accounting firm, simply doing the auditing, or are we going to be there to stimulate activity for people, to give them a chance to elevate their living standards for their family, to get their kids educated, and take care of the family necessities?

Right now, 14 million Americans are jobless, and they are worried about how they are going to stay in their homes, feed their children, and keep their families warm this winter. But unemployed Americans are not the only people who are struggling. Hard-working Americans from all walks of life are struggling to make ends meet. They are coping with skyrocketing grocery prices, surging health premiums, soaring college tuition.

In my home State, 1 in 10 New Jerseyans is on food stamps, the highest level in more than a decade. New Jersey has traditionally been among the top States per capita income in the country, within the top three, often in the first position.

On this side of the aisle, we are trying to help struggling families. I learned the hard way about family struggles when I was growing up. My father took ill with cancer when he was 42; I was 18. My mother, when my father died, was 37 years old. We had all kinds of obligations to pay. My mother took over the family leadership. We owed money for the pharmacy, for hospitals, for doctors. We were virtually bankrupt. I had enlisted in the Army. Next week, it will be 69 years ago that I enlisted in the Army, in December of 1942.

I know how tough it was and how much aggravation accompanies a family who just cannot keep their heads above water.

Here we are, in a day of some incredible wealth around this country—around this room—and Republicans are trying to thwart our efforts to extend and expand the payroll tax cut for working families—for people who depend upon their incomes to take care of their family needs; not on their savings, not on their inheritance, on their jobs.

Millions of American families have benefitted from this tax cut that we have had this year, but it stands to expire at the end of December. Our side is eager to continue this tax cut and increase the size of that cut to help these families. In my State, this means a typical family would receive a total tax cut of \$2,100 next year. For parents who are trying to feed their families, educate their kids, pay their bills, an extra \$2,100 goes a long way. To make sure that all working families receive this much needed relief next year, we are asking America's millionaires to pay their fair share, but the Republicans would rather protect their wealthy friends than continue the payroll tax cut for working families.

First, the Republicans blocked our side's efforts to cut taxes for the middle class. Then the Republicans offered their own plan. It was a disgrace. Their plan calls for a much smaller middle-class tax break, which they would have paid for by laying off 200,000 middle-class government workers. That is how they would solve the problem—fire people. Don't take it out of your bank account, don't take it out of your salary—even if you make over \$1 million a year—fire people. That will make sure they understand we are not as concerned about them as we are about the person who makes over \$1 million a year.

It was a cynical ploy. It showed the other side's true stripes. The Republicans say they are for lower taxes, but we now see that only goes for the jet set. Their tax-cutting zeal doesn't extend to the middle class. Republican priorities? Raise taxes on middle-class families. Middle-class families do not have it easy in America today. Republicans want to raise their taxes to protect the luxuries for the millionaires.

Make no mistake. Working families will suffer if the Republicans continue to block our efforts to extend and expand the payroll tax cut, and so will our economy. Last week, Barclays Bank warned that our GDP will drop 1.5 percent if the payroll tax cut is allowed to expire.

The choice is clear. We can continue the payroll tax cut for working families or we can allow the Republicans to continue running their millionaires' protection ring. The fact is, American millionaires are doing just fine. They don't need protection from the Republicans. Since the 1980s, our country's wealthiest 1 percent have seen their average household income increase by 55 percent. But for the bottom 90 percent, average household income has not increased at all.

As we see here, even though incomes are growing for the very wealthy, their taxes are actually going down.

We can also look at CEOs to see how well the wealthy are faring. CEOs at the largest companies are now paid an average salary of \$11 million a year. That is 343 times as much as the average worker's salary of \$33,000.

It used to be a much more modest comparison. In 1980, CEOs made 42 times the average worker's pay. Just look at that. Just a few decades ago the pay was much more reasonable, and the people who were working in the mills and making products and doing the service jobs and all of that were living significantly better than they are today.

Millionaires are making much more money today than they did in those years past. This is something I know something about directly. I was the president of a very large company when I came to the Senate. And you know how I got there: I had a boost from our country. I had enlisted in the Army, and I served in Europe. I got the GI bill. I went to Columbia University.

It happened because the country said: Frank, if you can learn we will help you. We will pay your tuition because you served your country. I've done well because my country invested in me, and I'm willing to invest more in my country today to help the next generation.

That company I helped start with two other fellows has 45,000 employees today; 45,000 people are working at ADP, the company I helped start, because we had a chance at an education and to learn what we had to do to be in management, what we had to do to be in leadership.

Our goal should not be to protect millionaires and billionaires who don't need our help. We should focus on the foundation that our society requires to function. We should be focused on protecting Medicare, food safety, Head Start.

Imagine, they want to take seats away from Head Start Programs. I visited a Head Start Program in New Jersey just a few weeks ago, and I saw the children. They were 3, 4, 5 years old. They were interested in learning something. I talked to them, and I wanted—one of the little kids came over and hugged me around the knees. I wanted to pick him up and take him home. He was so beautiful, so nice. I thought: Here is a child, learning. He came from a single-parent family.

The people who need help—we should be focusing on protecting them and giving them a chance to grow. We should be about making sure they have proper Medicare, that food safety is taken care of. Head Start, home heating for the poor, and other essential programs—we should be protecting them from reckless cuts.

The Republicans who served on the supercommittee refused, before the negotiations were started—refused to ask wealthy Americans to pay their fair share. They practically took an oath that they would demand nothing more of the wealthy, when the country is deeply in debt, starving for a better way to solve our problems.

As a result, the poor and the middle class are going to have to make up the difference. These are the people who need help the most right now. We must act now to protect the vital programs on which they rely. If we fail to act, our country and our economy will continue to suffer—especially Americans who are already struggling. It is just plain heartless to continue asking the poor, the middle class, the elderly, and our children to bear the entire burden of these brutal economic times.

It does not hurt any of us who have been successful to pay a fair share. It might cost a few dollars more, but if you are making over \$1 million a year, look in the mirror and see if you have done it all by yourself or whether it took the help of your country to get there. There is a whole cadre of people working across America—they go to work every day because they want to make a week's pay and take care of

their kids and take care of their obligations. That is the foundation that built America. It is the foundation of the development of something that was called the "greatest generation."

That was the generation in the last century who served in World War II. All of us had an opportunity to get a college education when we otherwise would not have been near a college.

That built our country. That strengthened our foundation. Now we see people, Republicans, who want to make it tougher for people to make a living, tougher for people to get an education, tougher to provide heat for people who desperately need it in the wintertime, tougher to think ahead and say: You know what. I know my children will do better than I have done in my life.

That used to be a truism in our view of life in this country. We don't hear that much anymore because people are unsure, and it does not help to have the Republicans sticking up for the wealthiest among us and turning their backs on working-class families in this country, the middle-class families. It is not right.

I hope the people across this country will say: No. We are going to say no to these Republican policies. I hope our Republican colleagues will disband their millionaires' protection game, stop standing in the way, and start standing up for everyday Americans who need our help.

Help us continue the payroll tax cut for working families. Help us protect the programs that benefit the people who need them most. Help us, friends on the Republican side, to make America even stronger than it is today. We can do that.

Countries are failing all over the globe. America need not to do that. We just have to make sure that while we take care of our expenses, we also make sure we have the revenues to do the job.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FRANKEN). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. SHAHEEN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF NORMAN L. EISEN TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE CZECH REPUBLIC

NOMINATION OF MARI CARMEN APONTE TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF EL SALVADOR

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that we now proceed to executive session to consider Calendar Nos. 360 and 501, and I send two cloture motions to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report the nominations.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Norman L. Eisen, of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Czech Republic.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Norman L. Eisen, of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Czech Republic:

Harry Reid, Barbara Boxer, Patrick J. Leahy, Patty Murray, Richard J. Durbin, Kent Conrad, John D. Rockefeller IV, Jeff Bingaman, Tim Johnson, Daniel K. Inouye, Debbie Stabenow, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Max Baucus, Charles E. Schumer, John F. Kerry, Mark Udall, Michael F. Bennet.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Mari Carmen Aponte, of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of El Salvador.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Mari Carmen Aponte, of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of El Salvador:

Harry Reid, John F. Kerry, Barbara Boxer, Patrick J. Leahy, Patty Murray, Richard J. Durbin, Kent Conrad, John D. Rockefeller IV, Jeff Bingaman, Tim Johnson, Robert Menendez, Daniel K. Inouye, Max Baucus, Charles E. Schumer, Mark Udall, Michael F. Bennet, Al Franken.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the mandatory quorum under rule XXII be waived in each instance; that on Monday, December 12, at 4:30 p.m., the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations concurrently: Calendar No. 360 and Calendar No. 501; that there be 1 hour of debate, equally divided, in the usual form; that upon the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate proceed without interviewing action or debate to vote on Calendar No. 360; and that if cloture is invoked, the Senate immediately vote on confirmation of the nomination, and following disposition of Calendar No. 360, the Senate proceed to vote on cloture on Calendar No. 501; further, that if cloture is not invoked on Calendar No. 360, the Senate proceed to vote on cloture on Calendar No. 501; that any statements be printed in the RECORD, and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

TRIBUTE TO JACOB'S TREE

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I rise today to extend my personal blessing this holiday season to the family of Jacob Akin of Somerset, Kentucky. This year, the town of Somerset has graciously chosen to honor the Akin family by accepting their donation of a 20-foot cherry spruce tree to be displayed in the town's Fountain Square as the county Christmas tree. More important, however, is the solemn but heart-warming story of the tree's origin, and the inspiration it brings to the people of the community.

The tree, known as "Jacob's Tree," was planted in remembrance of Jacob Akin, who was tragically killed in a terrible accident on December 6, 1994. Five-year-old Jacob was playing with his older brother, Abraham, in a house when a chimney unexpectedly collapsed on top of him. Thus, the holiday season each year is especially burdensome for his family, as it serves as a constant reminder of the horrific accident that took place 17 years ago.

A year after his death, his family decided to plant a tree to honor young Jacob. Over the years, the tree has helped bring comfort and peace to the family. "We decided to put up the tree in memory of my son," Jacob's mother, Rebecca Buis, says. "I felt like as the tree grew, I could keep up with the